



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

JUNE 1st, 1861.

MUSICAL EDUCATION AND INSTRUCTION,

By Dr. MARX, of Berlin.*

(Continued from page 38.)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUSICAL FACULTIES.

WE must have recognized that nature has given musical capabilities to most individuals; but that these powers and susceptibilities exist in the most manifold variety of gradations. The germ of these faculties, like that of all our other powers, is strengthened and unfolded by all the appearances and impressions of the outer world on us, from the moment of our birth; and when placed at the disposal of the instructor, it has already undergone a certain degree of expansion from the unconscious tuition of daily experience.

The development of the musical faculties, however, as far as regards the meaning of sounds, labours under disadvantages, particularly in northern climates, from which our other faculties are comparatively free. The most pressing wants and constantly urging requirements of life, call chiefly into action that other spiritual sense, the eye, in combination with the understanding. The child learns to distinguish earlier by the eye than the ear; while its understanding is almost incessantly employed in seizing the significance of sounds, as indicative of the objects of sense by which it is surrounded, rather than the meaning of sound in any musical relationship; a kind of affinity, which to the uneducated ear remains, perhaps, through life unknown. The musical element has less occasion to be exhibited by us more silent Germans, than among our southern and western neighbours. It is, nevertheless, as deeply significant, well defined, and powerful in our language, even as in the Italian, which, indeed, can claim superiority only in some degree of clearness, and an old prejudice in its favour.

Long continued neglect and suppression, indeed, of musical qualifications, are much to be lamented; more particularly during musical education itself, when such neglect operates most severely. Parents and teachers are more apt to complain of the want of disposition in their pupils, than to seek in themselves the cause of that deficiency. Only when the delays and the misapprehensions shall be attacked on all sides, and overcome, will our conviction be complete, that the musical qualifications given to most men are much more considerable than is generally believed.

OF THE TIME PREVIOUS TO LEARNING.

This period requires domestic care and solicitude, as a preparation for the directing hand of the master; and here it is, that the mother, as monitor of the awakening senses of her child, is called upon to exercise the budding susceptibilities on salutary objects, and shield their tender impressiveness from violent and distracting sensations. Certain determined sounds have an incalculable and lasting effect on the infant mind and senses, when presented to them without constraint or obvious intention. The pure sound of a little bell, the combined sounds of two or three glasses, producing, for example, $c-g$, and then $g-d-b$, the contrast of high clear sounds and low murmurings (in a decided rhythm, such, for example, as the following—



which appears sufficiently conformable to nature) are best calculated to affect the infant perceptions. It can easily be imagined, how at a later period, listening to the rolling thunder, to the whispering and rustling of the evening breeze, to the murmuring brook, to the moan of the impending storm, to the warbling of the nightingale, may penetrate into, and influence the yearnings and aspirations of fresh youthful existence, wherein are imbedded those bright germs of thought, whose future expansion and manifestation are exhibited in the high productions of genius, at once the glory and the despair of each succeeding age! But how many circumstances conspire to disturb, counteract, and disenchant these beautiful and fructifying moments of early youth, particularly in large cities! How necessary is help, where nature cannot be left alone! How harrassing and destructive, while the precious moments of culture are so few, that the delicate and tender perceptions should be jarred by the harsh rolling of the streets, the deafening crash of brazen bands, and the rough growl of drums; that their fine organizations should be either rent or palsied by coarseness or force, while yet scarcely awake to their legitimate functions! Let, therefore, every mother who has a perception of the charms of music, and of its civilizing influence, weigh well the importance of the early education of the senses. Her simple song, in which perhaps the infant voice is blended, is the most natural, and often the most fruitful lesson. A march of the most simple melody, and merely drum rhythm, which the boy and his father perform together, round about in their apartment, inspires more delight and feeling of measure, than many a half-year's instruction. If by great good fortune the tender ear of childhood should be indulged with the delicious enchantment of an opera, the few enraptured hours thus spent may cast a broad and glowing beam of sunshine to the latest days of life. For such an initiation we could wish every child to enjoy the

* Reprinted by permission from Novello's Library for the diffusion of Musical Knowledge, Vol. II. Dr. Marx's *General Musical Instruction*; translated by George Macirone.

dear old, but ever fresh and young *Zauberflöte*, that child's fairy-play, which Mozart has immortalized with the power of prolonging and reproducing during all our lives the earliest and most innocent blossoms of youthful delight. In this play, congenial childhood enters with the sweetest self-devotion into the wondrous and inconceivable passions of maturer age, and is carried away at last to the perception of the truth, to the dreaded dagger; but with such guileless purity, such forgetfulness of self, that the star-flaming queen can scarcely be reproached when she rises delicately, and without effort, in melting harmonies, from the midst of her sufferings. On the other hand, we would withhold from the young sensations, the old and revived operas of mere show and exaggerated effect; and more especially those prosaic representations of ordinary life, in which the music sinks with its subject into mere triviality and nothingness. In like manner we would spare our young pupils the infliction of chamber or social music, which in general they do not understand; and lastly, we recommend moderation in quantity. The first opera once,—the full organ in the church when empty,—seldom warlike music, and still more rarely, a concert. These are important moments in the young and impressible existence, and must be of extraordinary occurrence. Moreover, we would petition for the liberty for all children to play freely after their own fashion, on the pianoforte; to invent, and search, and lose themselves as they please, so long as they do not injure the instrument. This *ad libitum* playing is mostly prohibited, particularly if the days of instruction have begun. The child is told to employ itself more usefully, in finger exercises or written compositions. But how shall the individual musical feelings, or the yet feeble inventive imaginings, be fostered and educated to the self-power and trustfulness, if the only, and at this age indispensable means of cultivation be withheld? We are delighted to hear of the infant Mozart, who, in the third year of his short life, sought to arrange sounds in musical combination; and at the same time, we forbid the like practice to our own children, or disturb their often burning dreams of harmony with our short-sighted and self-sufficient worldly prudence.

We wish to say another word in these nursery details, concerning speech. It might almost be maintained, that we, in Germany, have more men who write, than speak well; so hollow and uncertain, so feeble and oppressively restrained does our magnificent, copious, and universally appropriate language appear in speech, while its perfections have only obtained for it the calumnies of undistinguishing foreigners, and the neglect of our own countrymen, who have mistaken, disfigured and corrupted it. How seldom do we hear any one among us speak openly and freely from the chest! How rare is the pure, full sound of the vowels, or the clear distinctness of the manifold

characteristic varieties of the consonants! When do we hear modulation of the voice in speaking? and rarer still, any attempt of raising or depressing the intonation, without the most abrupt helplessness? Much of this defective condition of our speech is probably owing to the rarity with us, of public speaking, and other restricting circumstances; but we doubt not that early education, and want of attention in after life, are, at least, equally culpable, in not removing these disadvantages, whose baneful influence indeed does not affect music alone.

Thus much we have thought it necessary to say, touching the fostering and development of the musical faculties before and with the commencement of musical instruction. More definite and minute particulars must be had from the teacher.

OF INSTRUCTION.

How often—we ask again—do we hear teachers complain of the want of disposition in their pupils, and how rarely is any serious exertion made *to develope and strengthen this disposition!* How seldom are the means anxiously and assiduously sought for, to strengthen the weak, and supply the deficient! Is, then, the object of musical instruction merely to enable the pupil to play a certain number of compositions,—to acquire an amount of mechanical cleverness, and a quick perception of visible signs? All this can be mastered by the understanding and corporeal aptitude alone, without any deeper participation in the soul; but it is also fruitless in the mind and disposition, and without life in artistic feeling. He, however, who is not satisfied with that empty and ineffective advantage, but thirsts for the really operative benefit of artistic cultivation, must seek it nowhere but in the fountain and domain of all art—in the artistic feeling,—and in the natural disposition from or to which everything is developed or tends.

Here a fundamental principle presses forward, which might seem too evidently correct to require mentioning, if it were not so often violated in practice. *We ought never to place anything before the scholar—no composition whatsoever, which he is not capable of completely understanding.* Works of deep meaning, much combination, or even merely great extent, require a certain maturity and settled formation of the mind for their performance, if they are to be presented with feeling and judgment, and not simply with mechanical dexterity. It would be thought ridiculous to give the works of Dante or Shakspeare to children, or even the easy extravagant fictions of Ariosto, and yet we require them to play Bach's fugues, and Beethoven's deepest works, or richly figured concerted compositions; and we give grand opera scenes to beginners, who might delight both themselves and us in a simple natural song. Unfortunately, this process, with a little cleverness and mechanical diligence, cannot easily fail of producing an ostensible

effect; and thus parents and scholars are deluded with the outward appearance of having made some progress—of a great step forward having been achieved; whereas, in reality, only one thing has been done, that is, nature has been paralysed and placed out of the reach of sympathy.

OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEELING OF MEASURE.

It is in this matter that the complaints of want of perception chiefly originate. This defect is, indeed, often formally instilled into the scholar. The feeling of measure and sensation of rhythm—we repeat it,—are innate in every human being gifted with understanding, but like every other faculty, in different gradations; and they are certainly not so far elaborated by nature, as to enable their possessors to distinguish and perform the manifold and artistically combined rhythms of our compositions. Let us examine one of the easiest sonatas of Mozart, Haydn, or Beethoven, or one of the airs of Spontini, Weber, or Rossini: what a number of digressing and artistically entangled rhythms! How the parts of bars are divided into quavers,—sometimes into semiquavers or triplets, with dots,—or joined together by binds and syncopations; what a variety of accentuations must occur in such a composition! Everyone who has but a proximate idea of this rhythmic multiplicity, must perceive at once, that without much care and education, the natural feeling of measure could not suffice for the performance of such productions. But this is just what the generality of teachers concern themselves the least about. If they pursue any regular plan in the instruction of the scholar, the compositions follow each other, almost exclusively, in the ratio of the dexterity they require in their execution. The entangled rhythm remains uncomprehended; and it is considered sufficient, if the measure, that is, the equableness of motion, be forcibly preserved by the perpetual counting of the master, accompanied by the pupil, and by incessant beating time in extraordinary and ridiculous attitudes. By these means, however, the feeling of measure, the finer rhythmic sense, and the insight into the nature of rhythm, cannot assuredly be inspired and developed. With every new composition, this misery of counting, beating, and stamping begins afresh, until a *mechanical habit of equality* is formed, instead of a *living feeling* for equal and uniform measure and its expression. It is unfortunately too true, that most musicians are content with the sense and capacity for mechanical equality of measure,—for the cold inanimate beat; and consider the rich and living rhythmical feeling as superfluous.

How easy is it, on the other hand, to an enlightened teacher, particularly in the beginning, to elucidate the various forms of rhythm by a methodical arrangement in respect of simplicity and increasing complicity or mixture! Marches for the boys, dances for the girls—four-hand

playing upon the pianoforte, or playing with other instruments, making the accentuation perceptible from the beginning—repetition of purposely accented playing—in case of necessity, marching or exercising arranged motions by the pupil, to the playing of the master, or of another pupil under the eye of the master; all these expedients,—preceded, of course, by a perfectly clear explanation and analysis of the rhythm, and many small helps and incidents arising from the instruction itself, and which cannot now be named,—are the most appropriate means of cultivating the feeling of measure.

It is only against excess in counting—against incessant and deafening counting aloud, and that insufferable beating time—that we wish to inveigh. These cannot be altogether dispensed with, particularly in the beginning. When their employment becomes necessary, the word used must be uttered sharply, whereby the feeling of measure is kept lively and attentive. A drawling utterance occasions indecision and uncertainty; impatient loudness deafens; and stamping the time disturbs the holding-on. A short loudly-whispered “One! two!” of the teacher at the proper time, a gentle and punctual tap with the finger on the reading desk or on the arm of the pupil, governs the measure more surely, and excites the feeling of measure more intimately, than the unseemly grimaces by which many a leader endeavours to display his zeal. In distributions or divisions not easy to apprehend, and two-part order (for example, in the solution of crotchets into quavers, semiquavers, &c.), instead of “One! two!” we may count “Firstly! second!” in which the word may indicate part of a bar, and each syllable a member thereof. If the phrase should change at once into three-part distribution, the Firstly! second! must be changed again into One! two! three! &c. In quick movements, half or even whole bars only are counted. The playing of difficult passages an octave higher by the master with the pupil, is very inspiring; and also counting parts only of bars in quick passages, and smaller members in slow passages. When the scholar has acquired some certainty, it is particularly desirable that he be led to omit the counting in easy passages, and resume it on the recurrence of passages of importance. In general, the scholar should be induced to relinquish external aid so soon as his apprehension and practice will allow it.

Mälzel's Metronome is a useful assistant to enable the pianoforte student to preserve equable measure in his exercises. It ought not, however, to be placed upon the instrument on which he is playing, because its regularity might be disturbed by the devious energy of his execution, as differently-going clocks will assimilate in their movements if placed upon the same board.

(To be continued.)